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121 114 politics and even religion cannot always avoid conforming to lines of ethnic cleavage too closely to prove wholly effective instruments of mutual understanding. Science, on the other hand, is absolutely disinterested in spirit. Its discoveries are for the whole world to enjoy. There can be no rivalry between the nations as regards their respective shares in the creation of knowledge except in so far as it takes the form of honourable competition in the training of sound scholars. The time is doubtless coming when more Egyptians will come forward as investigators duly educated in the critical use of evidence; and they will be welcome.

121 After all, it is hard to say whether the Egyptians themselves or the rest of the world have more to gain from the study of the age-long history of Egypt and of the no less enduring individuality of 133 its people. The country is self-contained enough, thanks to the geographical barriers that shut in the Nile Valley, to maintain a civilization answering to its own needs. Even physically the 144 Egyptian type breeds true to itself. As often as racial intermixture occurs, the foreign strain would seem to become recessive to the point of extinction. On the other hand, Egypt is situated at the 131 meeting-point of three continents. It presides over the junction 174 of the Western and Eastern water-ways of the Old World. How far its influence has extended, whether by direct or by indirect propagation, at various critical periods of history is a problem, much discussed at the present moment, on which the most distant regions may be able to throw light. Any diffusion of culture, however, tends to fade out toward its circumference, and is only to be fully understood by intensive study at the centre. In the case of Egypt it is possible to grasp the complex nature of the 175 centrifugal force thence set in motion all the more thoroughly because there is literary as well as material evidence at the disposal of the archæologist. Silent monuments, too, often form the only yield of the spade. Even pictures speak at best in riddles. Literature, however, when it came into existence in Egypt or in Mesopotamia could in some measure disclose that ethnic psychology which alone is the key to genuine history.

181 538 Nevertheless, the psychic life of a people is but partially and imperfectly reflected in its literature. Just as in the individual the unconscious part of the mind may be supremely determinative of the total character, so in a community the non-literary and

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

FOREWORD

largely inarticulate classes may do much by way of help or hindrance to shape its destiny. The people of Egypt, having retained their self-identity unimpaired during at least five millennia, a record which puts all other nations into the shade, can be studied now so as to frame a fair estimate of what, psychologically, they have always been. Miss Blackman's work having been mainly among the folk—that portion of the society whose hidden but none the less active impulses and beliefs govern the making of history as it were from below—she is contributing just what is needed to afford an adequate explanation of Egypt's civilizing activity as a spiritual movement.

A word in conclusion as to the usefulness of the woman anthropologist. She is sympathetic by nature. She is not politically suspect. She can get at the women, who as the educators of the rising generation exercise an immense influence on the formation of mental habits. In short, anthropology is as much a woman's job as a man's. It only remains to add that a woman who wishes to be useful in this way must follow Miss Blackman's example, and go through a suitable training before she enters the field.

R. R. MARETT

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2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

THE VILLAGES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

The influence of the deserts may be seen in Egyptian folk-tales, many of which tell of encounters there with *afārīt* and other supernatural beings. Secret caves in "the mountain," as the people call the steep, sometimes almost precipitous ascent to the high-desert plateau, also enter into the adventures recounted by the village story-tellers; these 'caves' are, of course, the ancient rock-hewn tomb-chapels with which the outer face of "the mountain" is in some places honeycombed (see Fig. 3).

Egypt is a land of contrasts, the marked difference between the very fertile Nile Valley and the arid, waterless deserts on either

FIG. 2. EDGE OF THE HIGH-DESERT PLATEAU, THE LOWER DESERT, AND IN THE DISTANCE THE CULTIVATION

side of it striking the eye of every visitor to the country. These physical features are, I think, reflected in the character of the peasants, for it is a remarkable fact that the most divergent traits of character can be seen in a single individual. The Egyptian peasants, in spite of much poverty and sickness, and with few amusements to break the monotony of their lives, are as a whole a wonderfully cheerful and contented people. They are very quick of comprehension, of ready wit, dearly loving a joke, even if directed against themselves, usually blessed with a retentive memory, light-hearted, kindly, and very hospitable; they are also very hard-working. At the same time they are very emotional, highly strung, most inflammable, generally very ignorant, and nearly always conspicuously lacking in self-control.

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Thus a man normally of a quiet, gentle, and peaceful disposition may on the spur of the moment commit some brutal murder. One year when I was staying in a small, out-of-the-way village in Upper Egypt a man killed a neighbour in a terrible way because he had stolen some onions from his (the murderer's) field. The moment after he had committed the crime he was weeping over the body of his victim!

One of the besetting sins of the Egyptian *fellāḥīn* is jealousy, which often becomes such a raging passion that a jealous man or

FIG. 3. THE FACE OF "THE MOUNTAIN" AND ENTRANCES TO ANCIENT TOMB-CHAPELS

woman is rendered capable of committing any violent crime. The women are liable to be jealous of one another's children, the wives about their husbands, the men of each other's prosperity or position, and so on to an endless degree. I do not wish to imply that jealousy is uncommon in other parts of the world, but I certainly think that it has a large share in the general make-up of the Egyptian character.

Again, the love of money tends to make them very avaricious, and is the cause of many serious troubles among them. On the other hand, they are capable of, and often actually perform, most generous actions, both in the giving of money and in the forgiveness of an injury. Quarrels between individuals, occasionally very violent ones, are common in the villages, but if a judicious

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

peacemaker arrives in time a serious disturbance can usually be avoided.

The accounts given in subsequent chapters of blood-feuds, inter-village fights, and other crimes of violence should not, however, cause the reader to pass too harsh a judgment on the Egyptian peasants if he will but bear in mind that the violent contrasts in the physical features of the country are reflected in the psychology of the inhabitants collectively and individually.

The *fellāḥīn* form the bulk of the population of Egypt,, and the

FIG. 4. A VILLAGE ON THE BANKS OF THE BAḤR EL-YŪSUF

larger number of them are Muslims. The Copts, who at one time were far more numerous than they are at the present day, are scattered about all over the country, though in a few towns and villages they may form the greater part of the population. The word 'Copt,' it must be borne in mind, does not denote a racial, but rather a religious, distinction.

The Beduins (Arabic *Bedu*, singular *Bedawī*), many of whom still lead a more or less nomadic desert life, and the Arabs, who have settled down as cultivators of the soil, also form a not inconsiderable portion of the population. Their facial features and certain styles of dress distinguish them from the native inhabitants. Nubians, Sudan negroes, Turks, Greeks, Syrians, and Jews are also to be found in large numbers, the four latter peoples chiefly in Lower Egypt, though they do not altogether confine themselves

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places his family would at once lose their position, and they would be looked down upon as nobodies. To our Western ideas such restrictions are apt to be regarded as a form of tyranny, but it is not a fair judgment. Seclusion is partly a sign of respect among Egyptians, and indicates the value that the men put upon their womenfolk. Most of the women have unfortunately a difficult and dangerous temperament, which, until they have learnt self-control, and have been inspired with higher ideals, makes them anything but an elevating influence in village society.

Though theoretically they are supposed to be entirely in subjection to the male sex, in practice they can, and often do, maintain a very firm hold on their husbands. I have known many men who are in mortal terror of their wives. Indeed, I am often inclined to think that it is the poor oppressed Egyptian *man* who has a claim to my sympathy, and that the over-ruled, oppressed wife is somewhat of a myth.

More often than not a man marries a girl from his own village, the favourite marriage being with a daughter of his father's brother. On the smallest provocation, some imagined slight, for example, a girl will run off to her father's or brother's house, and remain there until her husband, from fear of mischief being made against him in the village by his wife's relations, is induced to agree to do whatever his wife demands of him. She may require him to buy her gold earrings, a nose-ring, an anklet, or fine clothes, and, though a poor man, he may feel obliged to purchase one or more of these articles for fear of what his wife may do. Many men have run into debt for such reasons.

A man of my acquaintance, who owns a certain amount of land and is by way of being one of the rather superior people of his village, divorced his wife a year or two ago. She was quite a decent woman, but, her relations being poor, she had no land of her own, and, moreover, her husband's brother had died, bequeathing his widow a *feddān* (acre) of land and a little money. My acquaintance had his eye on this land, which was family property, belonging originally to his father, and the only way he could obtain it was by marrying his brother's widow. He did not want to have two wives, for it is expensive to keep up such an establishment ; also, monogamy is becoming much more common in Egypt, and to have more than one wife is looked upon as rather barbarous even among the peasants. The only thing to do was to get rid of his first wife.

THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

far as I know, from private individuals. It is very different in England, where the hospitals for children and adults alike are supported by voluntary contributions. It is not that charity is lacking in Egypt—far from it; but for *organised* charity such as we have in England there is a crying need.

It is not altogether surprising, considering the state of ignorance in which they exist, that the mental outlook of most of the villagers is low. As far as the women are concerned, there is nothing to raise it. Sexual matters form the chief topic of their conversation, and this has a most degrading effect both on them and on their children, before whom they discuss the most private matters without the slightest reserve. Thus the children from their very early years hear subjects spoken of and joked about in a manner that is most revolting to educated people. What chance have the children in such circumstances of growing up into pure-minded men and women? I am told (for such conversation rarely takes place in my presence) that the women are far greater offenders in this respect than the men, who usually refrain from discussing their wives with outsiders. Whether this is true or not I am not in a position to say, but at any rate the children, and especially the girls, who are more constantly with their mothers than the boys, hear the most private sexual matters openly discussed, and in such a way as to poison their minds at the very outset of their lives. Marriage is, of course, the one and only aim in life among the girls, and the desire to get a husband is encouraged in every way by the mothers. It is quite a pitiful sight to see a little girl decked out in all the jewellery she can muster, dressed in a gaily coloured frock decorated with beads and jangles (Fig. 17), and with a veil drawn coquettishly across her face, standing about the village street, or outside the house, obviously on the look-out to attract some man. In all this they are aided and abetted by their mothers, who regard it as a compliment to themselves as well as to their daughters if the latter are sought after as wives at an early age. The Egyptian Government is endeavouring to prohibit the very early marriages which have been usual in the past, and there is now a law forbidding a girl to marry till she is sixteen and a boy till he is eighteen. However, in small, out-of-the-way villages the law has been disobeyed to my certain knowledge in more than one case. False ages were, I suppose, given to the *ḳāḍi*, as the man who draws up the marriage contracts is called; and he, in view of the fee he

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believe, by cutting her throat. Unfaithfulness in a wife may likewise be punished by death, sometimes death by drowning. If her paramour also is caught they may be thrown into the river or a canal together.

The moral standard is very much lower in some villages than others, and I have observed that villages of pure, or comparatively pure, Egyptian stock are more moral sexually, more honest, and less prone to crimes of violence than are those of mixed negro or Arab origin.

In any case, it is not fair to judge these peasants too harshly. Much cannot be expected of them in their present condition of ignorance, and I believe that until the women can be depended on to exercise a purer and higher influence on their society there is not much prospect of the moral tone of the village communities being raised.

In later years a woman, especially if she has sons, has an honourable position in the family. A man's love and respect for his mother is a marked characteristic among Egyptians, and even after marriage the mother retains the highest place in her son's love and respect. Some years ago I was told that if a man ill-treated his mother and did not show her the greatest honour and respect the whole village would consider him a reprobate. In the married son's household his mother reigns supreme, and the wife who does not show proper respect to her mother-in-law usually has no chance of finding favour with her husband. As an old friend of mine, a man who had always had the greatest veneration and love for his mother, once said to me, " My wife is good, and I am pleased with her, but she must remain there [pointing downward]. My mother is up there [pointing upward]. Did she not carry me here for nine months [pressing his hands on his stomach] ? Did she not endure pain to give me birth, and did she not feed me from her breast ? How could I not love her ? She is always first and above all with me. My wife may change and may lose her love for me. My mother is always the same ; her love for me cannot change."

I fear I may seem to have given a very unpleasant impression in many respects of the peasants of Egypt, but I have dwelt on the darker side of the picture at some length not because there is no brighter side, nor because I am lacking in appreciation of the many excellent qualities to be found in most of my village friends. It is

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

because of my real affection for them, and because I very greatly desire to see their lives improved, especially from the moral standpoint, that I venture to speak openly on a subject in which I am much interested—*i.e.*, how to assure a more wholesome childhood and a higher mental training for the girls, so that they may be better and wiser wives and mothers.

I have every cause to speak of these people with affection, for their courtesy to me has been unbounded, and I have often marvelled at their patience and cheerfulness, even in the midst of poverty and great privations, which they bear with a courage that enforces respect. Their kindness to each other in times of trouble is most marked, and they will as a rule, however poor they may be, share their scanty fare with one whose position may be even worse than their own. This nobler side of their character shows what a fine people they might become were the women, the chief influence in any community, to receive a better training in childhood, a more suitable education, and to have held up before them a higher ideal of life.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER VIII

INTER-VILLAGE FIGHTS. THE LAW OF REVENGE

THE Egyptian *fellāḥīn* are by no means a military people, but in their inter-village fights, which are not of infrequent occurrence, they sometimes display a quite surprising ferocity. It must be remembered that to the Egyptian peasant his own village is the centre of the universe, and people of other villages, though treated with hospitality and courtesy as visitors, are, in some cases, looked upon with as much suspicion as if they were positive aliens. As will be seen later on, hostilities between adjacent villages were no less a marked feature of Egyptian life in antiquity than at the present day.

The inhabitants of some mutually hostile villages hardly ever meet without at least attempting to pick a quarrel, and I have been myself a spectator of such conflicts on more than one occasion. In most parts of the world it is usually found that the market-place is neutral ground, and that there even the most antagonistic peoples will meet unarmed. In some parts of Egypt, however, not only is the market-place the site regularly chosen for village conflicts, but fights which take place there are by no means confined to non-market-days! Various weapons (Figs. 57 and 58) are used at these inter-village encounters. The commonest are the *nabbūt* (a very stout single-stick), a primitive type of spear, and a battleaxe. The spear consists of a long wooden shaft terminating in a slender iron point or in a plain or barbed leaf-shaped blade. The axe is a long pole surmounted by a winged iron head. Stones too are used, and are thrown with deadly effect.

The first battle of this kind that I witnessed took place in connexion with the sinking of a large boat in a canal, the muddy bottom of which held it fast. An attempt had to be made to raise the vessel, to which two strong ropes were attached by divers. Large crowds had collected on either side of the canal, and the services of some of these people were enlisted in the efforts to raise the boat, but most of them, like myself, were mere spectators.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

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or village.[1] Doubtless, too, the ancient craftsmen were to be seen at work in the open shops as are their descendants to-day; and here it is to be noted that a support, somewhat resembling that upon which the modern coppersmith rests his vessel in order to hammer it into shape (p. 32), is depicted in numerous New Kingdom paintings of metal-workers plying their tasks[2] (Fig. 155).

I have spoken (p. 23) of the light-heartedness of the modern Egyptians. This, as my brother has pointed out to me, was an

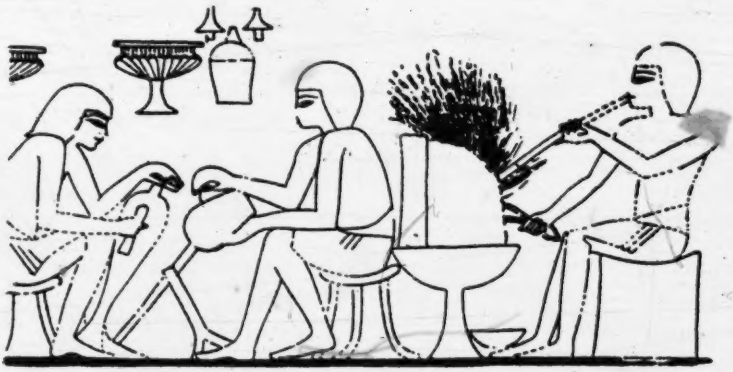

FIG. 155. ANCIENT METAL-WORKERS
After Nina de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Two Sculptors at Thebes*, Pl. XI.

outstanding trait in the character of the ancient Egyptians, as is well exemplified not only in their literature,[3] but in the paintings and sculptures which adorn the tomb-chapels of the wealthy, and which depict feasting, sport,[4] pastimes, and daily life in general. The Egyptians devoted all this labour and expenditure to the construction and decoration of their Houses of Eternity not because they were always morbidly brooding over death, but because they hated death and loved life and all that life stands for.[5]

I have pointed out on pp. 38 f. that it is to her brother that a

[1] See A. M. Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[2] *E.g.* W. Wreszinski, *op. cit.*, Pls. 36, 59*a*, 228, 241, 242, 317.
[3] See A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, translated by A. M. Blackman (London, 1927), especially pp. 36 ff., 133, 242 ff., 251 ff.; W. Spiegelberg, *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt*, translated by A. M. Blackman (Oxford, 1927), p. 29.
[4] *Cf.* A. H. Gardiner, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. ix, pp. 9, 12 and note 4, 15 and note 9; A. Erman, *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 122, 125.
[5] On this subject see especially A. H. Gardiner, "Life and Death (Egyptian)," in Hastings, *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. viii, pp. 19 ff.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

Chapter I

CHANGELESSNESS

The fellaheen (¹), that is to say the country labourers of Egypt, whose life is the subject of the following chapters, represent something more than a mere class. As a uniform, autochthonous mass, which constitutes more than three quarters of the total population, they may rightly be called the people of Egypt. 101 161

This people, which produced the earliest civilisation, or at any rate a civilisation of great originality that has lasted for fifty centuries, shows exceptional powers of survival and persistence. 101 175

The fellaheen have changed their masters, their religion, their language and their crops, but not their manner of life. From the distant epochs of the Old Kingdom to the climax of the dynastic period the Egyptian people preserved and maintained itself. Under foreign domination, for years or centuries at a time, by Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, French and English, it has remained unchangingly the same. Even today the fellaheen play practically no part in the Egyptian renaissance, or the movement for independence and progress. 175 178 [636]

They were at first pagans carrying totemism to the point of zoolatry, then for ten centuries Christians who reached the heights of asceticism and martyrdom. They made no difficulties about accepting Islam, and yet thirteen hundred years of Mohammedanism have done little to change their fundamental beliefs.

They are a receptive, yet resistant people; patient, but unyielding. Although they have dwelt so long at the crossroads of international traffic, in a country which has been the scene of earth-shaking events, they remain as calm and unmoved as the depths of the sea beneath a storm. 181

Here lies the heart of the problem. How are we to explain this physical stability, this changelessness both mental and social, this enduring and extraordinary sameness in a people? 178

The answer lies in the soil. The uniformity of Egyptian art is to be explained by its assimilation to the natural environment. The level ridges and steep cliffs on the edge of the Arabian and the Libyan deserts have produced the long, low, solid outline of the Pharaonic temples, as well as the regular cornice which finishes them. The papyrus, lotus, or reed which grew along the Nile were stylised in the pillars and capitals which we now call papyriform, lotiform, or proto-Doric. 178 121

For ages past an intimate bond, which successive masters of Egypt have used all their powers to draw even tighter, has existed in the Nile Valley, between nature and the human mind.

The fellah stands between the hammer and the anvil, between the soil and the masters of the soil. Yet by the very nature of his life he remains nearer to it than to them; and their hammer-blows beat him yet closer to the ground. This union is so real that the fellah's masters, who are also the owners of the soil, through owning the soil also own the fellah. Thus the fellaheen owe their astonishing uniformity and stability to their close association with an element no less uniform and stable, namely the soil of Egypt. There has grown up between these two a bond which is at once firm and elastic; a balanced and self-sufficient interdependence which no crisis or government can disturb. Here is, in the words of Sully-Prudhomme, "that stern, immemorial wedlock of a land and a people which have made each other". This unbroken contact of people and land has caused a perpetual interplay of action and reaction, of likeness and difference, which strengthens the indissoluble union of the two. On the one hand, we have nature, the physical environment in its broader sense, that is to say the climate and the sunshine and above all the water and loam of the Nile, its flora and its enveloping sands. On the other hand we have man, the social element, that is to say the fellah class, shut in no less by its habits than by its villages; dense, gregarious, but isolated and unorganised, closer to the soil, which it understands, than to the State, of which it knows nothing. 178 121 181

178 But we must at all costs avoid here even the appearance
121 of determinism. The fellah is no more the product of the Egyptian countryside than the countryside is the product of the fellah. There is no question here of inevitability, or any determining influence. Man is free, and this freedom is to be defined as "the power of self-determination".

Man is free, and cultivation remains contingent on his will. There are infinite possibilities, among which the will of man — not of the fellah, but of his master — chooses this or that, according to circumstances. At one time, the vine was grown on Egyptian soil. Grapes make wine, and the
241 veto of the Koran killed the vineyards. Not long ago, vast
249 areas were planted with tobacco, but the Government has now forbidden this. Maize of American origin, and cotton, introduced in the nineteenth century, are now chief among the crops. Tomorrow some new crop may cover the fields. No law of necessity, whether of climate or soil, determines once and for all the agriculture of Egypt; much less, then, human life. At the same time the climate and vegetation of Egypt exert a characteristic influence on those who live in, and on, the country.

181 In the case of the town-dwellers and industrial workers,
183 the bond between nature and man is looser; the impress
132 of the physical environment is softened and neutralised by the
133 stronger social, civic and political influences. This makes these classes less stable, but more progressive.
121

The countryman, on the other hand, is moulded directly by the soil. Febvre justly criticises the generalisations of Ratzel and Brunhes on the influence of physical environment (*); but without granting their theories anything like universal applicability we may recognise that they do apply sufficiently to agricultural communities, and especially to the Egyptian fellaheen.

It will become clear, indeed, that the monotony, uniformity and productiveness of the Nile Valley have their exact counterpart in the characteristics of the fellah community. These two are not parallel but correlative. They meet and crystallise in a distinct manner of life, which is at once a geographical and a social phenomenon. It will also become clear that the water and mud of the Nile enter into and in great part explain the whole life of the fellah, his work and his home, his body and his soul, and impart

to him both their qualities and their defects. It is because the fellah 'buries' himself in this mud that it has become so fertile. Egypt, gift of the Nile, is no less a gift of the fellah. It is because this soil has incarnated itself in the fellah that he himself is so enduring, but also so material, so stagnant. 181 183 132 133 121

Progress then must come from some form of release, of emergence, from education in the original sense of drawing out potentialities. The true duty of society is to liberate the fellah's spirit from its stifling envelope of mud; to free him from the defects of the soil, while leaving him its good qualities. The initiative can never come from his own community, which is completely numbed and powerless, but only from the classes which overshadow him, from the *élite*, who with their riches of mind and money can vitalise him. In this dough must work the leaven of intelligence and sympathy.

The following chapters will illustrate in detail these general remarks, and bring us by the logic of facts to the human conclusion which we have here outlined.

and below the cataract of Aswan, where the land is less rich and is still under the system of basin irrigation and large, semi-feudal estates. In the province of Aswan there are only 305,195 inhabitants to 224,000 feddans. This gives about 800 to the square mile. But the lowest rural density occurs in the lake region of the North, where the lands are low-lying, salt and marshy. Near Kafr-el-Dawâr, not far from Alexandria, it is only about 500 to the square mile.

This uneven distribution, though it may be explained by physical conditions, is not finally determined by them. In the outlying districts which we have just mentioned the full capacity of the land is far from being reached.

There is still another factor of prime importance to be considered — habit. Time as well as place has its influence on human psychology. The fellah has a stable, unadventurous disposition. He stays tied to his native village, which represents for him the security of both past and present. Unlike the Palestinian or Syrian peasant, he never emigrates to try his luck. He will never even take a job in another province where there is a demand for labour, unless he is pressed into it by force. If he does leave his native *balad*, it will not be for another country district, which could never be as good as his own, or afford him a better life or income; he will make for the town, and by preference for Cairo. So migration is comparatively rare, and owners of newly reclaimed land (*barâri*) find great difficulty in securing sufficient hands, despite the good pay and housing they offer.

Rural, gregarious, stay-at-home; such is the Egyptian people in its dominant characteristics. These qualities have contributed as much as the needs and possibilities of the soil to cause the over-population of the country.

Over-population, however, is a relative term, and there are a number of factors to be taken into account.

The adoption of perennial irrigation has made possible a more intensive exploitation of the most fertile land. Thus the area actually cultivated remained more or less stable between 1930 and 1940 at an average of 5,353,500 feddans; however, since much of this land produced two crops in the course of a year, the crop area, as it is called, rose to close on eight and a half million feddans.

the fellaheen are mere 'creatures', in which there is no point in interesting oneself, and which it is considered good form to know nothing about. Faced with the simplest of queries about them, the rich often show an ignorance which makes it quite clear that such questions have never occured to them, and arouse no curiosity. Even the best of them, while deploring the dullness and hidebound habits of the fellah, will do nothing to help him that might lessen their own income. All this maintains the gulf between the two extremes. 565 369

There is, however, a country middle class, consisting of medium landowners. Like the smallholders, they are closely attached to the village. Conservative, gain-loving and unpretentious, they live in the country and keep a close watch on the yield of their feddans. At feasts and funerals they give generously to their poor neighbours. From this class are drawn the pupils who fill the primary and secondary schools in the provinces, the students of the religious institutes dependent on Al-Azhar, the Government employees, and a number of police officers. It has produced the great men of contemporary Egypt, such as Sheikh Mohammed Abdou, Saad Zaghloul Pasha, Nahas Pasha, and Dr Taha Hussein. 565 423 181

These patriarchal families are, however, becoming fewer and fewer. One reason is the growth of their wealth and ambition. The second generation makes its way into the higher levels, and settles in Cairo or Alexandria. This exodus from the fields was largely encouraged by the boom of 1919-20, but apart from this the westernised education of the young and the taste for European things have produced a distaste for country life. Cairo and Alexandria, during the last fifteen years, have developed considerably in size and in amenities. Every year there is a new influx of wealthy provincials from the chief towns and villages in all the mudiriyas. Villas and blocks of flats spring up everywhere and luxury shops do a thriving trade. 556 565 166

A second reason for the decay of this middle class is the splitting up of estates by inheritance, for families are large. According to Moslem Law, which is universally applicable, the sons receive two parts each to the daughter's one. It is by no means unusual to find the grandson of a man who had 40 feddans inheriting no more than one, so that he falls back to the level of the fellaheen. 565 428 423

'omda's house takes its place. All day long he is receiving petitioners or travellers, unless he is going the rounds with some official or inspecting his own fields. He pays frequent visits to the chief town of the district, either for business or for pleasure. 622 692

This uncontrolled system, though it has many advantages for the Government, is full of drawbacks for the fellah, abandoned as he is to a master who knows no more about administration than about justice. There are indeed exceptions, but they are as yet few. The system is also prejudicial to public security. Crimes may easily be concealed, or even foisted upon the innocent, by such an autocracy. Village feuds usually owe their origin and persistence to the rivalries aroused by this office. 692 578

At Nahyet el Barûd, in the *markaz* of Abu Tîg, a new *'omda* was to be nominated. Among the candidates for the position two were outstanding, Sheikh Ahmed Abu Zeid and Sheikh Ahmed Farghali. One of these had been dismissed from the post by official action; the other, who had been *omda* in 1931, had also been dismissed by the Nessim Pâsha Ministry. Both candidates were much feared in the district, and each had a large band of supporters. The committee which had to count the votes and then decide the election was formed of the *maamûr*, representatives of the neighbouring villages, and the *maazûn* of the village itself. However, the eligibility of the *maazûn*, as being a relative of one of the candidates, was challenged by the other. The authorities of the *markaz* then let it be known that the *maazûn* of another village would sit in his place. But on the day of the election, which was to be decided by a show of hands, it was seen that the first *maazûn* was still on the committee. His enemy's supporters objected, while his own friends upheld him, and the two parties came to blows. Worse than this, they made use of whatever weapons they could lay hands on, and a savage battle ensued. Before the police could intervene, three men had been killed and a number of others seriously wounded. The authorities arrested both candidates. The *mudîr* of Assiut gave orders that elections at Nahyet el Barûd and the neighbouring villages should be suspended until order was re-established (11th July, 1937). 622 666

Towards his superiors, whether officials or landlords, the fellah adopts an attitude of awesome respect, of servility 181

181 and mistrust. He puts up with the cruellest treatment from them, and they, despising him as they do, whether they be Egyptians or foreigners, believe that such methods are a necessity.

181 565 694 A rich landowner of my acquaintance, an excellent fellow at heart, declared: 'The fellaheen must be driven with the lash.' A *moâwen* of the police who, as I entered his office, was raining blows on a man up for trial replied to my expression of astonishment: 'This is how you have to treat them. They are beasts.'

369 So great is the cleavage between town and country, between the still uncivilised fellah and the more or less Westernised townsman, that the gulf is neither narrow nor recent. In a private letter written three centuries before Christ these words are found: 'Do not take me for an Egyptian fellah.' Then as now the representatives of the town appeared in the village only to take their rents, or to levy the taxes due to the State [19].

121 We are not for the moment discussing the fellah's psychology; but it must be said in conclusion to this chapter that although he is much sought after as a taxpayer or producer he is still unknown as a man and neglected as a citizen.

565 The political and economic pyramid of Egypt bears down with all its weight on the fellah. The oligarchy at the top may have changed its form, but pressure at the base, that is on the fellah, has been little relieved.

His ignorance, his isolation, his bondage to the soil, prevent him from putting up any resistance to this crushing burden; and it is a burden which moulds his whole life.

241 312 It has been calculated that by this method little more than 200 cubic feet of water, or enough for about one acre, can be raised in a day of twelve hours. Such a yield bears no reasonable proportion to the effort exerted, but the instrument is extremely cheap. As long as poverty remains, such methods will continue in use.

This method is called *nattâla*. It was already known to the fellaheen of Ancient Egypt [22] and is used by Japanese peasants, for example on Shikoku.

Second Method

One or two men crouch at the water's edge, turning and turning the crank handle of a wooden cylinder, which reaches from water level to the mouth of the runnel. The water rises spirally inside this cylinder, which is about 18 ins. across. This is the *tambour* or Archimedean screw, a wooden cylinder hooped with iron and about six or nine feet in length, according as it is turned by one or two men. The spiral is fixed between the inside wall and an iron axis, one end of which is bent into a crank, while the other turns on a stake fixed under water.

The *tambour* can irrigate two or three times as much as a *nattâla*, but it costs more and is heavier to work. Moreover, since it requires the continual use of the forearm, it is very much more tiring. Nevertheless it is still much in use, and may frequently be seen.

These two kinds of water-lifting machinery are practicable when the water level is not very low, but sometimes water has to be sought three, six or even thirty feet below the level of the field to be irrigated.

The easiest thing would be to instal a pumping engine. There are many of these on the large estates, but none on small properties; for as the fellaheen are numerous and conservative, poor in money and rich in time, this "convenience" does not commend itself to them. They solved the watering problem ages ago in a way which matches their means, and they feel no need to desert their present system for one which may possibly be better, but which is as yet new and untried. 181 183

To raise water from a depth of more than three feet the fellah uses a method as primitive as it is simple. He plants

243 Northern Delta. It occupies about 6% of the cultivated area, but its acreage depends on the height of the Nile flood, and is controlled by the Government. Thus in 1935 there were 470,375 feddans under rice, in 1937 only 240,469, and in 1939 476,454. The rice is of good quality and can be exported.

241 [262 252] Beans (*fûl*) provide fodder for draught animals, from June to December; those of the best quality, prepared with oil or fat, make a rich and popular dish.

Onions and sugar-cane are grown in Upper Egypt.

Then there are barley, lentils and dates, not to mention vegetables and fruits, the cultivation of which, although confined to certain localities, increases year by year.

The fellah keeps a narrow strip or corner of his field for his own use. Here, without using any manure, he plants the vegetables appropriate to each season: *bamia* in winter, *fûl* in spring and *molokhiya* in summer. These will be mentioned again in the chapter on the fellah's food. Apart from occupying much less space than other crops, they are cultivated in much the same way as the rest.

241 463 181 Egypt is becoming a land of variety in crops, but this diversity has not involved any sort of specialisation for the fellah. He is still a manual labourer, a "Jack of all trades", and his work remains simple and monotonous. There is not enough differentiation to form specialists of any kind, nor enough uniformity to limit his work to one dull task. This means that the fellah can adapt himself to any new crop. He will never introduce a novelty himself, but will take to it if encouraged by authority, the more readily if experience proves it to pay. This has been noticeable in the case of flax.

177 242 407 Mechanical innovations, however, are a very different matter. The preceding pages will have made it clear that there is never any question of tractors, reapers or binders, let alone winnowing or threshing machines, or even cars and waggons. Such machines as these are scarcely more common today than in the past. The fellah is too poor to use them, and in any case he feels no need for any instrument which would divide him from the soil. It is true that the large estates under direct cultivation employ extremely modern machinery, which is handled by fellaheen, but this is an

exception. The fellaheen as a whole use no machinery at all. This is probably due less to habit or ignorance than to an instinct for self-preservation. If machinery is not more commonly used in Egyptian farming, the reason is that the owners find man-power more economical. For the moment the two points of view coincide. But it will not always be so. One day the fellaheen will increase their demands, and machines will become more profitable to the landowners. Manual labour should keep its leading place, however, for to mechanise labour in the Nile Valley would be to destroy the organic relationship which has grown up between the cultivators and their soil, and overthrow a balance now preserved by methods of labour appropriate to an abundant population.

2. Conditions of Work

To this soil the fellah devotes all his energies. He gives himself to it without reserve, even passionately when it is his own. But that is very rare. Here man belongs to the land, not the land to him. This is the true cause of both his lethargy and his poverty. None of the conditions under which he may labour make for freedom. Let us look in turn at each of the varying conditions which obtain today.

The Fellah as Forced Labourer

The *corvée* was suppressed in 1893, but continues to be legally applied in certain cases of public necessity. Then the fellah is mobilised by authority, torn from his field and his village, and sent to the spot where his services are needed.

It may be that the Nile flood threatens catastrophe. On such occasions hundreds of thousands of fellaheen are set to work day and night under the rod of officials and overseers to raise the embankments, build dykes, deal with any escape and watch the barrages.

Suppose a dyke is on the point of breaking. The fellaheen rush in a compact mass to the point of danger, each with his *fass* and basket. They heighten the dyke and buttress it with a great rampart composed of earth, rushes, palm-trunks, and — if need be — maize-stalks and sugar-cane.

In 1934 they saved the country by such efforts. The Government set aside L.E. 150,000 to fight the danger;

in the village, while the *Crédit Agricole* takes it at only 150 kg. as in the cities, and advances 130 piastres (1937 prices) on each *ardeb*.

Your cunning merchant proceeds to deposit the wheat, which he pretends to have harvested, in the *shoonas* of the bank. He thus gains 10 piastres and 25 kilogrammes of wheat on each *ardeb* bought, and without assuming any risks himself can confidently expect an additional premium at the time of sale by the *Crédit Agricole*.

There are no walls but only low ridges or channels dividing the fields of Egypt. In the same way there is no sharp division between the various kinds of labour which we have just been analysing. None of these categories is self-sufficient, and each overlaps the next. There are few fellaheen who do not pass from one to another, or belong at the same time to two of them. The very conditions of the fellah's life imply a certain similarity in them all.

(1) *Poverty*. Because he knows nothing of either foresight or economy, and even more because he is weak, isolated and ignorant, the strong and the rich reap the fruits of his labours. The bank or the moneylender, the Government, the *omda*, or the landowner, gathers in most, if not all, of what he has sweated to produce. He himself, to use one of his own sayings, remains "poor as a needle, which clothes others but itself remains unclad".

(2) *Dependence*. The fellah can plant neither what he wishes nor when he wishes. As a day-labourer he works in a gang at a definite task under the strictest supervision. As tenant farmer or share-cropper he plants his crops according to the owner's plan. As landowner he is dependent with regard to dates and choice of crops on the orders of the Ministry of Agriculture. He has no sort of liberty or initiative one way or the other.

(3) *The minimum standard*. However bad his affairs may be, the fellah is at least certain of his daily bread. No-one actually starves to death in the country; for even under the worst conditions of labour the natural resources of the land remain.

(4) *Family Labour*. The help given to the fellah by his family must never be lost sight of. Among the Egyptian peasantry, wife, children, *gamoossa* and donkey make up

511 why the balance of the fellah's budget is so easily upset,
434 and that is why he is so often swamped by debts and interest.

454 If in any given year, by a stroke of good fortune, none
181 of these extraordinary expenses befall him, the fellah, hoarding piastre after piastre in a pot hidden in the earth, can at last see his dream come true, and buy a *gamoosa* or a few *kirats* of land. It is this alluring possibility, always just round the corner, which makes him continue year after year, like the soil and with the soil, the same unwearying work.

437 At last business is over. Before sundown, after interminable parleyings, the fellah goes home with goods or money calculated to increase his well-being, or at least with pleasant memories of a day full of sights and sounds.

464 571 Pilgrimages and markets swell the traffic on the country roads. Here again can be seen the love of the fellaheen for crowding together and moving only in congested groups.

484 [505 292 494] If they have to cross the Nile or a canal to reach the village opposite, the fellaheen throng so densely into the ferry-boat or raft (*ma'adiya*) that accidents are frequent. When they set out on foot or on donkey-back, laden with astonishing bundles, it looks like an evacuation. When for a long journey they take the *trombil* or *halazona* — an old Ford converted into a bus — forty of them push their way in where there is room for only twenty, and they take it very ill if police regulations are enforced. One of the reasons for a certain minister's unpopularity in the country was his insistence on applying these regulations. When they have [497] to travel by train, they arrive several hours beforehand, cluster on a corner of the platform, and scramble all together into one carriage, even if there is plenty of room elsewhere.

In general, then, the fellaheen like being together, out of doors and in crowds. They are sociable people. But does this mean that they are socially minded? Is there any organic relationship between the members of the peasant group?

361 181 Let us first of all consider the village as a whole. This with its surrounding land forms a closed system outside which everyone and everything is foreign and unknown. It leads a secluded and individual life, which is organised from within by habits, customs and taboos handed down from the distant past, immemorial laws which rule absolutely the acts and the pleasures of every inhabitant.

181 619 The fellah finds the same difficulty in widening his outlook in space as in projecting himself into the future and practising foresight. His village is all in all, for it is here and now. It is his country, and the limit of his patriotism.

When a fellah is asked about his nationality, he will reply: "I am from the village of Manfaloot, or Abu Korkas", and occasionally, a little more widely: "I am from the Mudiriya of Menufiya, or Assiut", but rarely, if ever, "I

am an Egyptian". Though far more truly an Egyptian than most political figures, he is unconscious of belonging to a nation. This explains why, in the nationalist movement which swept over Egypt after the end of the first Great War until she obtained independence, the world of the fellaheen took no part. Nation, liberty, politics, these are words and notions beyond their understanding.

During the first Great War the English recruited a native contingent, the Labour Corps, to defend Egypt from the Turkish attack on the Suez Canal. These "volunteers" had to be enlisted by force, with even more difficulty than for other forced labour. The same lack of patriotism explains the distaste of the fellaheen for military service. The 24,000 soldiers of the Egyptian Army are almost all recruited from among them. In practice the law of 1902 does not apply in all its rigour except to them. Government officials and their sons; only sons, eldest sons whose fathers are dead, helpless, or over sixty; students; ministers of religion; and invalids are all exempt.

A man liable to service is at the mercy of the lot between the ages of 19 and 27. When the lot falls on him he is enlisted for five years. To ensure his rejection he may put out one of his eyes, or cut off a couple of fingers. He will get into debt to buy himself off from military service, or register as a student. If he can, he will hide or escape. As many as 35% of the recruits shirk their service.

When there is no way out, and he cannot avoid leaving home to join the army, the family receives condolences and abandons itself to mourning as if for a bereavement. To leave the village is like going abroad. *Partir, c'est mourir.* "Enlistment in the army is the passport to town life. Everything in the countryside grieves and protests — ox, plough, *saqia*, *gamoossa* and all" (Guindi).

The conscript will be sadly missed on the land. It is not surprising that the fellaheen prefer to pay twenty or even a hundred pounds to avoid service, even if they are to be burdened with debt for a very long time.

This is not to say that they make bad soldiers. The fellaheen are men that know how to handle a gun, and the victorious armies of Mohamed Aly and Ibrahim Pasha were composed of them. That is ancient history, but it

ever be allowed to die of hunger. The mutual help of the men in field-work and of the women in housework, the more readily given as poverty is greater, deserves every commendation. The way in which the fellaheen will work to accomplish something in the common interest, when they are not under orders, shows what they are capable of. Yet when land, a woman, or an *'omda* is in question, rival parties are established and the feud is kept up in every family from generation to generation. Everyone in the village has to take sides. Neutrals are despised. The antagonism, though usually latent, will show itself suddenly over some trivial matter, such as the shifting of a boundary mark, a theft of manure, or a *gamoosa* trespassing. Then human life counts for nothing, and death takes a holiday, especially in villages where there is Arab blood in the fellah's veins.

Thus life is lived in constant insecurity. To feel this, one must spend a night in a village. As soon as night falls precautions are taken against a possible foe. The cattle, including the camel if there is one, are brought indoors and shut in the house. The family also take refuge together behind the great closed door. The head of the house often stays outside watching his field or his water, for the enemy is always on the prowl. As the shadows deepen, the dogs begin to bark and gunshots become frequent.

The shots come not only from the unsleeping watchman, trying to reassure himself and everyone else, but also from fellaheen armed going in defiance of the law. During harvest the fellaheen become even more suspicious, and may be seen with a rifle slung over their shoulders as they stand with their feet in water to gather the last tufts of cotton.

In May 1936 the village of Qalandol was divided into two camps over the selection of an *'omda* — the friends of Mahmud Bakr on the one side, and those of Aly Abbas on the other. Mahmud Bakr made some slanderous remarks about his opponent, and one morning his son was found dead in the fields. A few days later the sister of Aly Abbas was stabbed as a reprisal. After that, for a whole year, both sides watched and waited. Neither work nor journeys were undertaken alone, but always in groups. One market day, when crowds of fellaheen had come from villages near, a young man of the party of Mahmud Bakr was insulted by an opponent, whom he struck. At once the supporters of Aly Abbas

683 rushed upon the young man. He fell, pierced by several
579 knife wounds. Bakr's men, as soon as they heard of the crime, bore down on the spot with rifles and staves, crying "Allah, Allah!". The others replied with the same cries, and the battle began in earnest. An hour later there were three dead and many wounded. By midnight the two parties, determined to fight to the death, had taken up positions in the hills. The police had the greatest difficulty in restoring order.

186 Race hatred between Arab and fellah, and religious hatred
779 between Copt and Moslem, though lulled by common lives and interests, are never completely extinguished, and furnish the explanation of many a drama.

571 So trust and mistrust persist side by side. The main
181 source of both is the soil, which unites the fellaheen if it is
186 threatened, but divides them as they own or covet it. Thus
[621] the peasant group, united against the outside world, is divided within itself. Patriotism and nationality mean no more to the fellaheen than the ideas of co-operation, public interest, or civic pride. The village in Egypt is not a community in the social sense; it is not an organism, but a mass.

Similarity in their mode of life, and propinquity, do not necessarily create a deep relationship among human beings. A certain spiritual life is needed, or at least a certain personality, to make social relations possible. The fellah appears to be as little of a personality as he is of an individual. Absorbed in the soil, and oppressed by those above him, he lives collectively but not socially. Though living in a herd, he remains solitary and aloof.

This absence of co-ordination among elements in themselves homogeneous has kept the Egyptian village, the typical peasant group, in the primitive state of a conglomeration lacking either material or intellectual system. Through fifty centuries Government after Government has maintained this formlessness, as it greatly strengthens the central authority.

Such are the common features of the fellaheen, and of the 14,000 places in which they live (").

342 3. Houses of regular design on the model '*ezbas*', such as those of the Royal Domains, the Agricultural Society, and a few individual landowners.

4. Shapeless huts made by newcomers and semi-nomads out of rags, empty petrol tins, palm leaves and mud.

5. Fieldshelters (*zarbiya*): huts built of reeds, or mere screens of maize stalks set in the open country during the period of heavy winter work.

But these, as has been said, are exceptions; the typical fellah house, representing 92% of the total, is of earth. It is a dwelling without style or age, which is yet one more sign of the persistent uniformity of the Egyptian peasantry.

361 Let us walk into one of the alleys that wind through
342 the clustered village. On each side the narrow dun-coloured
363 houses stand wall to wall. They may be from five to ten
362 metres wide, and about two and a half metres high, or at the most five if there is an upper storey. The quarter is old, and the village older still, but the house itself is comparatively new. This is because the materials and the methods of construction make the building impermanent. Fires, and in Lower Egypt the Nile flood and the rain, have necessitated constant repairs, which soon leave little of the original structure.

● 181 The dwelling of the fellah, like his work, derives its character from the soil, the manner of his life, and the social environment. The fellah is housed by the same earth that feeds him. He is a man of the soil in the true sense of the word. Here it is true that matter determines form.

333 The staple building-material is a mixture of clayey soil,
331 straw (from barley, beans, or flax), cow-dung, and Nile water.
342 This may be smeared over both sides of a rough framework of maize stalks, palm leaves, or reeds, to make the mud walls of the poorest type of house. It may be poured into wooden moulds to make crude bricks (*tûb akhdar*), which are dried in the sun and then used for building. The mortar used to join them is made of the same simple mixture, and so is the plaster which sometimes covers and protects the walls.

A wall so constructed, to be strong enough, must be from twelve to eighteen inches thick. A fellah with money to spare will build on a foundation of kiln-baked bricks (*tûb ahmar*) or of limestone rubble. This prevents the damp

352 353 and toilet use there is a large flat tub (*tisht*) which serves as both laundry-basin and bath, a fragment of mirror, and 296 a big wooden chest which may hold almost anything. This 515 was a gift at the betrothal, and its crude colours are reminders of a red-letter day. "In this chest near the oven, whose key the mistress of the house wears at her neck, I have seen all jumbled together eggs, pepper, cheese, rags, needles and thread, several necklaces and a packet of *kohl*." This from the letter of a surprised French missionary.

● 181 356 The close proximity of men, cattle and soil is as noticeable in the fellah's house as in the field and the village. It is a reflection of the fellah's social level and manner of life. Like house, like household.

The fellah's dependence on soil, sun and water extends even to his house. He himself is of the earth, earthy, through his labour and his food, in his diseases and finally in his death. His house no less, by the material of which it is made — floor, walls, roof and all — and by its very squatness is a part of the earth.

342 362 181 183 The fellah lives out of doors because of the lack of comfort in his home, which is no more than an unfurnished sleeping-place and a store-room, a part of the crowded camp which is the village.

All the houses are alike. The fellaheen have little individuality; each is an atomised unit of the mass, and his household but one cell in the agricultural hive. At the same time there is little or no space reserved for agricultural uses. The fellah works for others, and does not store the produce of the land for himself.

Yet this dwelling, which lacks so much that we deem essential, is so well adapted to its tenants and their habits that they will change or rather deform into its likeness any better-appointed house built for them on a model *'ezba*.

342 421 A house on an *'ezba* belongs to the owner, one in the village to the fellah. House and site together are worth at the most L.E. 25. There is no rent or house tax to pay. On an *'ezba* the dwelling enters into the conditions of lease or share-tenancy. In the village it belongs to the head of the family.

592 In this homestead scarcely larger than himself the fellah leads a life of his own, no longer as a serf but as a master. Each house contains a large family, including very often, besides the father and mother, four or five children, a grand-

594 From a fortnight after marriage until her first son is five
462 years old, the wife helps her husband in the fields, especially in the cotton season; but, unlike the Alawite peasant women for example, she never tackles heavy work.

462 More often she is busy at home; there is plenty to do,
562 for she mills and bakes, rears and milks the *gamoossa* and the
593 goat, looks after the fowls, prepares manure and fuel, sews, washes, and delouses herself in public.

She is free to come and go within the limits set by village tradition. She is not hidden from the menfolk like townswomen or the women of the middle class. She has to carry breakfast to her husband out in the fields, then return home with the *gamoossa's* dung, and fetch water several times a day. She must go to market to sell eggs, butter and poultry, and to buy oil and other things. Tradition and necessity outweigh the severity of the Koran.

The wife retains ownership of the furniture she brought on her wedding-day, and the money for what she sells. In this way she can save and even lend to her husband, which gives her a certain authority. If he maltreats her, she can go back to her father's house and impose her own conditions before returning — the gift of a dress, or a pair of ear-rings. She is less dependent on her husband than he is on her.

593 A year or two ago, when the men were being levied to
● 181 meet the flood danger, I heard a woman weeping. "Don't
731 take it so much to heart", I said. "They've taken your
231 husband off, but he'll come back."

"It isn't for my husband I'm crying, but for my lost *gamoossa*. Find me my *gamoossa*."

562 The *fellâha* retains her liberty and authority as long as
577 she is wise enough not to infringe the traditions; for then the man gets the upper hand again. She will die rather than let herself be examined or treated by a doctor. She may go out and gossip with the other women as much as she likes, but woe to her if she is found in the company of a man, or even alone in some unwonted place. If she goes wrong, her husband accuses her to her family. Then her
684 father, brother, or cousin must kill her. Such *crimes d'hon-*
577 *neur*, being commended though not established by Islam, are still frequent and are treated with indulgence by the courts. But the severity of the punishment is out of proportion not only to the crime, but also to the woman's education.

Chapter VIII

TRADITIONS OF THE SOIL

181 Certain traditions, rites and ceremonies are handed down from generation to generation without being either questioned or understood(**). These are traditions of the soil, bearing witness to the union of the fellah with his field, and the closeness of the peasant group to soil and water and their products.

This intimacy was clear enough when we were considering the work, life and home of the fellah. We shall do well to prepare ourselves for a study of the fellah's psychology (Chapter IX) by considering some of the traditional rites and customs which are to be met with at every turn of his life.

These are not merely superstitions, though it would be as difficult for us as it is for the fellaheen themselves to explain the origin or meaning of them all. One thing they all seem to have in common: they point to a mysterious correlation between nature and man. Unconsciously or subconsciously, in repeating these rites the fellah shows an instinctive feeling that he belongs to the soil. It is a feeling which has contributed a good deal to the stagnation of the Egyptian countryside.

312 The fellaheen have a great respect for water, the water 771 that comes from the Nile. They avoid filtering it, so as 823 not to take the life out of it. They bring it to be blessed by the passing missionary, and offer it as a familiar and much-appreciated drink. They never mistrust it, and make no distinction between washing- and drinking-water. All water is good, like the Nile from which it comes.

796 The festival of the Bride of the Nile, or the Cutting of the Dam, takes place in Cairo (**) at the height of the flood. The fellah has no part in it, but he feels much more than any townsman that the Nile is male and alive. The river 823 is always flowing within his sight, either in the foreground,

Chapter IX

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE FELLAH

The peasant masses live on their own resources, without any contribution to speak of from outside. This is their strength and their weakness. A peasant is born, whereas a worker is made. The constant influence of the fellah's environment cannot fail to mould not only his body, but his soul as well. 181 183

We now know what the fertile Valley of the Nile, on the one hand, and the pressure of the social pyramid, on the other, consists in. The demands of both enslave the fellah; his life is all dependence—dependence on the soil, on material things, on the living and on the dead. The fellah must always obey, like a child under age ; such is the framework within which the outlines of his temperament are drawn. However difficult and however liable to misleading generalisations any study of collective psychology may be, we can nevertheless trace with sufficient accuracy the essential features of the mind and character of the fellaheen. The common factors of country, race, religion, social status, and manner of life, all of which we have considered in the foregoing chapters, entitle us to write in the singular of the fellah's soul.

It would be easy but unjust to judge him on a single point, as his masters do. "The fellah is lazy", they say. "All bodily labour is an effort to him. So he would rather live without bettering his condition than tire himself".

"The fellah is hardly ever grateful. However good his masters may be to him, he never shows them the least sympathy. He swears devotion to them when they are there and is active and hardworking ; but as soon as their backs are turned he becomes slack again and loses all initiative. "The fellaheen are a cowardly, cringing lot". "They are stupid, evil people. They take every opportunity of cheating you."

181 183 Other landowners or *nazers* take a better view. They say: "Under their noisy exterior, our fellaheen are quiet, gentle people. They are satisfied with their lot, but rarely grateful. They have no interests apart from the soil." "The fellah is always happy and grateful. He is a hard and trusty worker."

114 181 183 Some of these opinions, which are taken at random from both Upper and Lower Egypt, seem flatly contradictory. They are not enough to make up a portrait, in spite of the good intentions of those who gave them; they all arise from a misunderstanding of the fellah and are in both senses of the word *partial* truths. The living reality is more complex. It would be an error of simplification to say 'Man is born good and it is society that makes him bad', or to look at only one side, the good or the evil, according to one's sympathy or lack of sympathy with the subject, or to one's own characteristic personal philosophy and outlook. To create a true picture, all these aspects must be taken into account. As in the old stereoscope, the image cannot appear in depth until both views are seen together, when there is a real combination of elements.

181 183 One important point must have become clear from what has already been said: that the fellah's intelligence is rather collective than personal, and more static than dynamic. His wisdom and experience have crystallised into pithy sayings and proverbs, which are ready coin for all the different circumstances of his life and absolve him from individual thinking.

The fellah preserves and repeats, but does not originate anything. Any improvements or inventions introduced into agriculture or housing have been imposed on him from outside. Through constant acceptance and submission his intelligence has become atrophied and passive. It is always kept in leading-strings and never stimulated to innovation. That would mean running risks and disturbing a torpor which protects him from unnecessary suffering. What a man knows is better than what he does not know.

This lack of personality and initiative furnishes in its turn an explanation for the want of sensibility or of any living art among the fellaheen. They are uncultivated in *this direction less* because they are illiterate than because they neither think nor strive. In their fellah costume, in

their villages and in their fields they provide subjects for the art of others, but remain unconscious of their own beauty. Yet their love of the soil, their sense of rhythm, and their taste for songs, stories and colours should make their artistic education easy. /81 /83

They are more apt at figures, at repetition and at copying. The author has met fellaheen who can do very complicated arithmetical problems in their heads, and can put an accountant right where he has made a mistake, whether by accident or design. Others reproduce models they are given with the utmost faithfulness, and retain for a very long time the memory of a remark or a visit, or of an object they have been shown. But although their memory is excellent their understanding is slow. [803]

Yet in childhood they are quick to understand, as may be seen when they are in school or at play; but at about fifteen they begin to get dull. Up to this age the fellaheen are lively, and seem quicker than the people of the West.

Their early physical development and the effect of the climate might explain this. But what can explain the apathy that overcomes them afterwards, and keeps them, in spite of everything, a backward race? /81 /82

Undernourishment has been suggested as a cause. But if this were responsible their physical development would also suffer. The adult fellah has a strong constitution. Some sociologists put it down to masturbation, which is fairly common in the Islamic East; but this vice seems limited to the cities, for country people are much less morbid. It has also been attributed to the unavoidable effect of climate, as a plant which grows too quickly stops growing at a certain point, and withers. But there are fellaheen who have left their villages and produced in the second generation good doctors, capable engineers, or at least officials and businessmen equal to those of other countries. [142 839]

It can only be his social environment which limits the intelligence of the young fellah, that is to say the crass ignorance which surrounds him from his first entry into the community, and the routine of a life which bows him down to the soil and condemns him to everlasting repetition. This is what arrests the development of his mind. Intelligence is developed by new gain and achievements, which are unknown in this too stable world of the Egyptian peasantry.

183 The women are more intelligent than the men. Sir
184 William Willcocks, whose great achievements in irrigation by no means prevented him from studying the fellaheen, explains the difference thus: — "A bad government, if passively accepted by men, who are naturally active, will sooner or later demoralise them. The same government, if passively submitted to by women, who are naturally passive, tends on the contrary to develop their intelligence. That is why the fellah women are not only more intelligent, but more trustworthy than the men (**)".

This opinion is open to discussion. The fact it seeks to explain — the traditional feminism of Egypt — is quite clear.

181 The fellah's wife is also more cunning than her husband,
183 which is saying a good deal. Like all weak people the fellah
562 practises cunning to the point of duplicity. He knows how to conceal his joy, his suffering or his crime. His inexpressive features are a great help. In his shifts and dodges — when he leaves it to time to decide, when he agrees without any intention of keeping his word, when he uses evasive language or purposely misunderstands — he shows an adaptability which is indeed a kind of intelligence, but intelligence at the level of instinct.

181 The fellah seems lacking in logic. In reality his ideas run parallel, and he judges by his own standards. Ask a
[823] fellah how far it is to a certain village, and he will reply "A piastre bus-ride".

181 The *'omda* understands this mentality perfectly. "Go
565 to your father, my lad, and tell him that the Bey (his creditor) is waiting here for him. If your father isn't there, tell him to come all the same, for the Bey knows that he is there." And the father, his bluff called in advance, comes along without any trouble at all.

181 The truth is that the fellah does not think outside the immediate present; he is fettered to the actual moment. No time and place except the present have much effect on his mind, because they have none on his senses. He is like a primitive man or a child; his intellect is controlled by his senses, and remains close to things felt and done. The fellah looks for causes and effects in the field not of reason, sight. Life to him is a succession but of todays. That is why he seems illogical.

This mental defect, which is maintained by lack of education, is the cause of his improvidence. The whole year through he will deny himself even necessities; then the Feast comes, and he spends everything. His whole family enjoys two or three days of excitement — new clothes, rich food, sight-seeing. Then he goes back to his old life poorer than ever. 181 527

Suppose he has a few pounds in hand, which he has earned or borrowed, and his field needs attention. Does he buy tools or good manure to increase its yield? No, he will run further into debt to purchase the adjoining lot, to own a little more, to seem less of a smallholder. And when the time comes to repay? Sufficient unto the day... 181 185 423

The housewife never trims her lamp until it is already dark. The ploughman never greases his plough until he begins work. He pays his debts when he is forced to, buys seed on the eve of sowing, sends for the doctor when there is no more hope. He is improvidence incarnate. 183

Maqrîzi, writing in the fourteenth century, notes this shortsightedness. "One side of the Egyptian character is never to take thought for the future. The Egyptians never store up provisions like the inhabitants of other lands. Another of their characteristics is the absence of reflection. My friend Sheikh Ibn Khaldoun used to say: 'The Egyptians act as if no day of reckoning would ever come'." 181 185

It is a fact that they neither think nor act except as the occasion demands, according to the pressure felt at the actual moment. Their reaction is determined by immediate sensation. This is why they are at the same time trustful and mistrustful, individualistic and gregarious, miserly and thriftless, patient and fiery-tempered. 181

They show a trust amounting to credulity in sacred things or persons able, as they think, to fulfil their desire for children, revenge or health. Their innumerable superstitions, the prestige enjoyed by ministers of the cult, and the success of pious-seeming impostors are all signs of this unbelievable credulity. 181 771

At the same time they habitually mistrust one another, even within the same family. Their master they mistrust even when he does well by them. They are like children too often deceived and stinted, who suspect everybody else of being jealous of the little they have. This is the root of their belief in the Evil Eye. 181 571 578 754

[81] [83] This fear and mistrust, justified by long ages of extortion and betrayal, make the fellah selfish and unable to see anything except as it touches himself. When he saves, it is in the greatest secrecy. If he has done good business, he will take great care not to speak about it ; so closely does misfortune dog prosperity. When matters of profit, land or women — the usual causes of division — are no longer in question, then the social instinct becomes paramount. We have seen how gregarious the fellaheen are in their work, their rejoicings and their sorrows. This sociability, when there is imminent danger to face, turns into solidarity. More usually it results in good humour and childlike display.

The more the fellah has saved up in the secret hiding-place in his home, the more likely he is to be carried away by the crowd at a holiday feast and squander it, for show as much as for enjoyment, like a child who cannot resist the temptation of a shop-window.

He is light-hearted, because neither past nor future worries him. He enjoys to the full the present moment : *Carpe diem.* When interrupted by an order, he replies "Tomorrow" (*bukra*), driving what he has to do out of the range of his consciousness, holding as long as he can to the present. Even when he has to obey at once he replies "*Hadir*" (presently) or "*Tayyib*" (very well) without any intention of hurrying himself. Everything in its own time. As he hopes for no improvement, why should he exert himself ? His torpor is his refuge, his *kaif*, that is to say his 'how', the way things suit him.

Kaif is a word of profound significance, expressing a kind of wakeful passivity which means doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing. It is a form of perfect patience, taught him by the soil. To keep his mind half awake, to wait without apparent activity, or to drown activity in a private fantasy, in a humming which lulls his work and all his movement, in a mental languor which softens the shocks of human contact, that is *kaif*, the fundamental attitude of the fellah, a semi-consciousness which abates suffering.

He will come several hours early to catch a train, but may equally well arrive several hours late for an appointment. Punctuality, precision and haste are beyond his ken. Why should he set limits to the present or hustle it away ?

Because the fellah lives entirely in the present, he is neither hurried, nor curious, nor ambitious. He is mild and peaceable because he is patient, and patient because he is subject to men and events, and for these very reasons he is, like the Nile, indifferent rather than idle. He feels no need for constant activity. His mind is passive and fatalistic ; he takes things as they come. 181 183

At times, however, some fact breaks suddenly through the confused atmosphere of his mind, through this mist that protects him from excess of knowledge or action — as from suicide — and goads him into activity. Then he reacts on the impulse of the moment, without discrimination or sense of proportion, without reckoning the importance of what has happened or thinking of the consequences of what he is doing. His neighbour pinches some of his harvest, a duck, or a fowl. Someone diverts his irrigation water or lets a *gamoossa* loose on his grazing. His son is bullied by another boy or his wife insulted by some other woman. A friend delays too long in returning a few borrowed piastres, or looks too long at his wife. Someone brings a complaint or accusation against him. Then the same fellah who is so patient under the injustice or cruelty of his superiors shows himself to his equals as touchy as can be. The occurrence may be of little or no importance, but it seems to him intolerable and stings him to revenge. He reacts violently, and infects others with the same passion as himself. Human life counts for nothing. 181 152 577 578 [685] [683 426]

In Upper Egypt, when a man quarrels with another he will try to attack him on the spot with any weapon he can lay his hands on. The fellah of the Sa'id is like a volcano which will erupt when least expected. 579 181 578

More usually the revenge is cunningly dissembled, and carried out by night with endless precautions. The enemy will be set upon from behind, in the maize fields ; or if the man himself is not attacked his crop will be burnt, his *gamoossa* poisoned, or his corn scattered over the neighbouring fields.

Though the fellah will put up with a multitude of wrongs from his masters when at work, he is not afraid to stand up to them if the dispute is about women, for women and land are the points on which he is most susceptible. Then there 181 183 578 562

181 is no question of strong and weak, rich and poor. Authority
183 and wealth count for nothing. Landowners know this,
578 and cannot take their pleasure of the village women.
562 More than one Bey has been murdered at his own door for seducing a village girl.

682 Murder and revenge among the fellaheen arise more
181 often from quick temper than from ill will ; they are signs
152 of hot blood. But such outbursts do not last long, and resignation, being more habitual, is a far more noticeable characteristic.

[539] The following fellah proverbs are significant :

Patience moves mountains.

Patience costs nothing.

The patient man sees free.

773 'When God created all things', says Ka'b el Ahbar, according to Maqrizi, 'He gave each of them a companion. "I am going to Syria", said Reason. "I will come with you", said Rebellion. Poverty said "I am going to the Desert". "I'll come with you", said Health. "I am going to Egypt", said Plenty. "And I'll go at your side", said Resignation.'

181 Resignation is a word scarcely strong enough to describe
183 the servility and degradation which is imposed upon the fellaheen not so much by their poverty as by the unceasing pressure of their masters. The fellah acts like a child or a brute because he is treated like one. He knows nothing of the upper class which rules him except its hard exterior. It is often said that the fellaheen cannot understand an authority that is humane and appeals to their better instincts. This is true, but the reason is that they have been brought [681] up to nothing but blows, fines, insults, and bullying, which have finally rendered them insensible.

I myself, before I understood the meaning of human dignity, used the same harshness towards them, so natural and inevitable did it seem.

That the fellah's sense of justice is corrupt, that he lacks frankness, confidence, and eagerness is true, but this is because no one has done anything to teach him these qualities or to give him any moral encouragement.

It is also true that his work is done without pleasure, without devotion and without style, that he has no taste for doing a job well, that he lacks initiative and inventive-

ness ; but these defects are due to his servitude and isolation. In the words of El-Kolâly, his mind is walled-in between ignorance and tyranny. (*)

Moreover the soil and the care of the soil make the fellah patient, long-suffering and hard. The soil has imprinted on him something of its own earthiness. His very love is entirely physical, and yet he is not immoral.

He is taught from childhood that he comes from his mother's womb. His bad language when he is angry shows how much he knows of sexual matters. Even girls playing with dolls enact scenes of perfect realism. But this calm animal shamelessness has nothing in common with obscenity. Fundamental morality is not affected by it. The fact that everybody is watching everybody else, together with the conservative temperament and instinctive modesty of the fellaheen, makes offences against morals fewer than elsewhere. As El-Kolâly says, 'Among the fellaheen offences against morality represent only a small proportion of the total'.

Poverty and tradition inure the fellah from his early days to the lack of all bodily ease. A comfortable bed, a pleasant home life, a good table, light company — these are things beyond his grasp. Their absence safeguards his morality. So do the precepts of Islam, it might be added ; but the fellaheen are very ignorant of their religion, and the Sheikhs and Ulema do little to teach them. It is more probable that among these primitive people natural morality keeps its original force.

The fellaheen are moral because they believe in God. They are material, but not materialistic. They believe wholeheartedly in the intervention and providence of God. It is always "*In sha Allah*" — if it is God's will. They make no plan, undertake nothing without adding "*In sha Allah*".

A Greek merchant says to a fellah, "You'll bring me your cotton, then, tomorrow ?"

"Yes, *ya khawâga*, (*) *in sha Allah*."

"Five cantars, not less. You understand ?"

"Yes, *in sha Allah*."

"You'll be able to find the camels for them ?"

"*In sha Allah*."

"I must have the goods before midday."

183
771 "*In sha Allah*".
812 "In sha Allah's no good. We're talking business, and
437 I want a definite promise".

"No *in sha Allah*, no cotton, *ya khawdga*. Good day".

771 'God will provide. God distributes His benefits. God
776 protects the crops. God is with the patient. To everyone
● 181 the fate which God has assigned him. We are from God, and to God we shall return. God is there. God will give in His own good time. Man proposes and God disposes. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.' Such are the sentences of peasant theology. They encourage fatalism and deepen resignation, but they are often rich with all the splendour of filial obedience to the Divine Will.

776 The fellah believes in God as the Prime Mover and First
812 of all Living. In spite of the poverty of his intellect, and his ignorance in matters of religion, his conception of God is admirably pure. God is the Almighty, the Just, the Good. All attributes are united in the word the peasant uses for God, *Rabbina*, our Lord and Master. To hear a fellah utter this word is to be convinced of his faith.

771 The superstitions which enmesh his soul have not cor-
782 rupted the essence of his faith. The fellaheen are far more
785 given to prayer and asceticism than other people, for they are by nature believers. They have always been powerfully attracted by sacredness (*baraka*), the supernatural, holiness, or even the appearance of these things.

779 The Catholics among the fellaheen, whom the writer
793 knows best, can be splendidly religious in their lives, even to
771 the point of heroism. Those of their priests who are fellaheen live among them and for them with a devotion and self-denial of which missionaries from Europe would rarely be capable. It must not be forgotten that the first monks of the Christian world, the monks of the Thebaid, were fellaheen (").

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Egypt MR 1

CHAPTER X

THE FELLAH AND PROGRESS

In the great square in front of Cairo station stands a massive group of statuary hewn from Aswan granite. It represents the Sphinx rising on its forefeet, with a woman standing beside it, her hand on the nape of its neck, and her veil raised. This is *The Reawakening of Egypt*, by an Egyptian sculptor, Mukhtar.

During the last half century Egypt has made more progress than any other Near Eastern or Islamic country. Politically she has become independent first of Turkey and then of England, and established herself as a sovereign State. This evolution has been made possible by the birth and growth in a whole class of the idea of nationality and a consciousness of the destiny of the Egyptian nation. Since 1923 the Kingdom of Egypt has had Ambassadors and Consuls abroad, a purely Egyptian Government, a parliamentary life and an opposition, universal suffrage and political parties with electoral programmes, ministries and a more and more specialised civil service — in short the whole paraphernalia of a modern state.

Nevertheless this political life affects only a tenth of the total population. The fellaheen, who constitute the remaining nine-tenths of passive and unorganised citizens, take no more part in it now than formerly, when Turks or English ruled the country.

They are either ignorant of the existence of all these new ideas we have just mentioned, or they have no understanding of them. They are Wafdists if you like — that is to say, members of the Nationalist Party — in the sense that the *'Omda* or the political agents have written their names in the party lists, but they are neither active members nor even supporters in the way Russian peasants would be, for example. No-one has taught them their rights and privileges. Demo-

and new Faculties and Departments have been created. In 1942 a second University was founded, at Alexandria. The Government's primary and secondary schools count their pupils by hundreds of thousands, and are endowed with all the latest improvements. Then there are numerous private schools of older foundation. Even the ancient Moslem University of Al-Azhar has felt the wind of reform, and has established new branches, the Institutes of Shubra, Tanta, Assiut, and Qena. Three thousand teachers are busy with elementary education in the villages. Egyptian publications, whether newspapers, reviews, or books, compare in style and content with the best in Europe, and are a model for all the Arabic-speaking countries. Yet the most important newspaper, *Al-Ahram*, the *Times* of the Near East, has a daily circulation of not more than 100,000, and the farmers' review, *Zamil el-Fellah*, which is published by the Ministry of Agriculture and distributed free, prints only 48,000 copies.

The scientists, scholars, and men of letters who come to Egypt every year for congresses or conferences find in Cairo or Alexandria audiences as eager and open-minded as those of Paris. They are astonished and say so.

Thinkers and students are busy creating a national language, a national music, a national theatre and cinema, something which shall be specifically Egyptian, and not just vaguely Islamic. It is very interesting to follow this development of culture. But we must turn aside to see what is happening below.

Have the masses been caught up in this tide of renewal? Are they following the élite of the cities? The answer is: either not at all or at such a distance that no movement is discernible. Illiteracy still prevails among an overwhelming majority. The latest statistics have had to recognise it. (") It may be that the fault lies with the English, who developed everything in Egypt except education; with the fellaheen themselves, who are not very gifted and show no eagerness to learn; or with a syllabus ill-adapted to their mentality and forced upon them with compulsory education. Whatever the cause the fact remains that 95% of the fellaheen can neither read nor write. Even if they know how to read, they remain strangers to all interchange of

is of graver consequence for the individual than for the group. In this poverty the fellah is too rich.

His ignorance and backwardness, his churlishness and servility, which contrast so strikingly with the refinement of the upper classes, are more tragic than his lack of means.

The fact that he does not feel the depth of his suffering is no reason why it should seem any the less degrading. On the contrary, when he feels it more keenly and becomes fully conscious of it, his deliverance will be on the way.

The real evils, then, are the fellah's lack of education and culture, and the incomprehension or inaptitude, if not scorn and indifference, of those who might be helping him.

The greater number of official measures, for example, are thought out in offices quite remote from the fellaheen, and put into practice by officials who have nothing of the countryman in them. Whether they are concerned with health or education, agriculture or justice, they spring more from theory or from imitation of other countries than from a practical knowledge of the true state of affairs. Their starting-point is not the way of life and thought of the fellah, but a preconceived ideal. They are too interfering, and are imposed on the fellah in a hard, threatening manner. They are planted on him from outside, without ever arousing his interest or enlisting his help, so that he is unable to believe that the Government is genuinely trying to do him a service. And his distress remains the same as ever.

Here lies the explanation of the amazing series of failures which makes the pessimists say "It is no use doing anything for the fellaheen". Experience shows, however, that private organisations of limited scope and resources, because they are working *with* the fellah and not merely *for* him, because they advise instead of commanding, and promise instead of threatening, have been able to gain his confidence, and in spite of unavoidable false starts have achieved excellent results.

One example is the model village of the Royal Agricultural Society, mentioned in the previous chapter. The finishing touch was put to this in December 1941 by the establishment of a 'Social Centre'.

Another case is the happy experiment tried on a large *'ezba* of 1600 feddans in Beheira, where the landowner, a

expense, which amounts to about L.E. 70. These *gallabiyas* are not distributed anyhow, but fitted individually by the *ndzer's* wife, according to height and taste. At the Bairam festival there is a general distribution of meat, four pounds to a person, which costs about L.E. 40. Fat is also given to those who have no *gamoosa*. The fruit crop of the orchard is shared out at intervals. Whenever a child is born, a set of baby-clothes is provided.

When a fellah gets into debt, the *ndzer* advances him what he needs, without any trickery. The man pays it off by days of work.

Drinking-water is supplied to all from a pump at the entrance to the *'ezba*. A dozen lavatories and two shower-baths have been set up near the mosque.

This beautiful mosque, built by the Christian landowner, who also provides for an *imam*, brings together the menfolk of the *'ezba* and its surroundings. A *kuttab* was attached to it, but this has been closed since the opening of an *ilzamiya* school in the next village.

Fellaheen who go sick are cared for by the *ndzer*, who has by practice become something of a doctor, or sent to the Government doctor at Mit Ghamr. The wife of this kindly manager, when she was there, used to take care of the people herself, wash their eyes, and give them clothes and good habits too. For twenty-four years she stood at her husband's side.

When she died, they showed that fellaheen are not incapable of gratitude. They discovered by childish tricks, in spite of efforts to keep the truth from them, that she was seriously ill in Cairo. Thirty of them piled into a couple of taxis and drove off to the hospital. It was like a public demonstration, people said. Later, when they saw the *ndzer* and his children coming back in mourning from the cemetery, their grief was as spontaneous as it was general.

This mother left her daughter an example to follow. And follow it she does, with her gentleness and good temper and her mastery of Arabic. It is easy to see how much they love her, those unloved peasants.

This experiment in social justice has not made either the owner or the *ndzer* any the poorer. The estate is one of the most productive in Egypt, and all its products have won prizes at agricultural exhibitions.

this quack at a crushing price. When I examined it I found the bulk of it to be powder of ginger [*zangabīl*]. All the people of the provinces believe that these substances are exciting and burning in proportion to their usefulness. But what I say is, that the employment of ginger as *kohl* is very like the use of the powder of *Jakarīīī* (?) one of the plants of Brazil. (It is violently corrosive and is used to produce artificial purulent ophthalmia).

The Moorish quacks employ in cases of ophthalmia a medicine which one of them divulged to me as a great secret, saying that it was composed as follows:

(1) One drachm of the liver of a cock with ten claws;[1]

(2) One drachm of clarified fluid from the eyes of an old hoopoe[2]; [p. 56] (3) five drachms of *shūnīz* (i.e. "*the black seed.*")[3]

Boil the whole over a slow fire, and after it becomes dry and powdery, let it be used as *kohl*; then the old hazinesses will become clear, and it will put an end to the ulcerations of the eye and cataract.

XXIX

THE INFLUENCE OF GUISES AND TITLES AND APPELLATIONS

FATE has decreed that the Egyptian should neglect his rights and rate himself lower than the Westerner with his different origin and nationality. So you see him not only being let down in the eyes of Europeans (who have some right for glorying and boasting on account of the benefits they have attained in Science and Civilisation), but also in the eyes of such

[1] [The colloquial word used is *mu'awshar*, and it is said that when such a cock enters the house and crows, an angel will appear. Tr.]

[2] [The *hudhud*, or *hidhid*, the celebrated bird in the Solomon Saga.]

[3] [This is the seed of the Fennel flower, black cummin, and is often named in the vernacular, *habbat-al-baraka*, the "seed of the blessing," because its other name, the "*black seed*" is not propitious. See the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, XII*, 207. Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 Egypt MR1

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

Orientals as the people of India, China, the Hedjaz, Persia, and Dongola, and even the Berbers who have depended on his favours from ancient times even to the present day. So that you see him [i.e. the Egyptian] although he is a native of the land and its rightful owner, living only from hand to mouth in spite of his many endeavours to better himself.

The same may be said about the Egyptian physician because "*the singer of the tribe does not charm.*"[1] He is lower in rank than any foreigner, even if he be distinguished for skill and dexterity in his profession, whereas his foreign colleague may be distinguished for stupidity and ignorance. Anyone who considers the truth of the matter can be certain that our native patients glory in their illness when they can say, "Our doctor is Monsieur so and so, possessed of such a certificate from the High School of Paris," or, that he is Mr. or Signor such and such, although the patient in the majority of cases does not know anything of the circumstances of his physician, whether [p. 58] he be French or English, for example, or Italian. And the fact is, if we try to excuse him because of the justifiable reputation of Europe, we cannot do so when he resorts to the Moor Sīdī al-Ḥagg al-Tlimsānī, or Shaikh 'Amr al-Rūḥānī, or Sīdī Muḥammad al-Sūdānī, or others who deceive and ensnare simpletons. The reason is that their country is without adequate medical schools, so where can they learn medicine?

I beseech the reader to be patient while I relate to him an event which happened last year. While I was sitting one day with some colleagues in a certain place, some people entered whom we knew, accompanied by a Shaikh in the garb of the Hedjaz (full-sleeved gown, *kisā*, and "hunchbacked" turban). He was introduced to us as Shaikh Manān ibn 'Abd al-Manāf, and that he was a physician who "cured" every ailment. We received him with the utmost respect and reverence, and made room for him in the highest place. Then when we opened a discussion, he began to inform us of strange "cures." He soon began to rave in his talk and to beat about like a blind she-camel in a pitch-dark night, so that he imagined, I perceived, that none of those in front of him had any acquaintance with

[1] [A quotation from *Ibn al-Jauzī* (12th Cent.). A prophet is not acceptable in his own country. Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

out the contents of the egg in the dark place, he takes a lentil grain and places it on a tumour and recites over it this charm: Oh, lentil become a tumour! Oh, tumour become a lentil!

He then places the lentil inside the egg, and so on until the number of lentils equals the number of tumours. Then he runs in haste to an eastern wall on which the rays of the sun are striking and buries them in it, and the tumours fall away in consequence, in a few days, not exceeding a week. And this is truly beneficial according to the story.

The true explanation. We return, as we already said in Part I (p. 27) to the question of demons (*'afārīt*). Often they (i.e. the "old wives") assert that the hen (particularly a black one, since that is mentioned in the "prescription") has an obedient servant for herself, her eggs and their possessor, and by the secret of his influence upon diseases, or by his powerful relationship with the demon of diseases, the tumours will fall away. They believe that every disease has a demon, as is the current creed among the village witches, according to another opinion.

Often the shrinkage of the vessels feeding these tumours is brought about by a certain degree of imaginative influence. [p. 26.] Then (the tumours) wither gradually, and this is as far as medical explanation of their falling off is possible, if what the narrators say is correct.

XIII

CATARACT AND AMMONIA

EGYPT is indeed a happy hunting ground for every trader and quack. How simple our Egyptian *fellāḥ* is! He loses his life and cheapens his body for the experiments of those who trade in spirits. But the *fellāḥ* of Egypt is not to be blamed, for he has no instructor.

There came to me one day a patient complaining of his eyes. On examination I saw the left eye-ball protruding from the

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

114 ited to a few pages, and yet it is just these which are vastly more important to us Egyptologists, for the history of culture. But the work of a layman's leisure hours can not produce a supplement to Lane.

Some young, efficient Arabist, with open eyes and a fondness for the land and inhabitants, and possessed of sufficient knowledge of Ancient Egypt and the Coptic language, ought to bury himself for two or three years, in an Upper Egyptian village. I am convinced that this sacrifice would be richly repaid in regard to the Arabic language also. It can not be accomplished by mere visits during the season.[1]

Up to this time next to nothing has been done in this direction[2], and who knows when it may be too late?

It would please me most of all, if my book should prove an incentive for the production of a better one, which would form a companion-piece to G. Dalman's excellent "Palaestinischer Diwan" (Leipzig, Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1901).

Heinrich Schaefer.

Steglitz, June 13, 1902.

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[181] [1]) The Egyptians are much more unapproachable and reserved in many things than is apparent from slight contact.

[113] [2]) Klunzinger's splendid book: "Bilder aus Ober-Aegypten etc." (Stuttgart, 1877.) gives a great deal, but not all, by far, of the wealth of material.